

The White Devil

By John Bunyan

THIS doctrine of coming to Jesus Christ for life, informs us of the evil of UNBELIEF; that wicked thing which is the only or chief hindrance to the coming sinner. Doth the text say, “Come”? Doth it say, “And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”? Then what an evil is that, that keepeth sinners from coming to Jesus Christ? And that evil is UNBELIEF: for by faith we come; by UNBELIEF we keep away. Therefore it is that by which a soul is said to depart from God: because it was that which at first caused the world to go off from him, and that also, that keeps them from him to this day. And it doth it the more easily, because it doth it with a wile.

This sin may be called THE WHITE DEVIL. For it oftentimes, in its mischievous doing in the soul, shows as if it were an angel of light: yea, it acteth like a counsellor of heaven. Therefore, a little to discourse of this evil disease, I observe:

1. It is that sin, above all others, that hath some show of reason in its attempts. For it keeps the soul from Christ, by pretending its present unfitness and unpreparedness: as want of more sense of sin, want of more repentance, want of more humility, want of a more broken heart.

2. It is the sin that most suiteth with the conscience. The conscience of the coming sinner tells him, that he hath nothing good! that he stands inditable for ten thousand talents; that he is a very ignorant, blind and hard-hearted sinner, unworthy to be once taken notice of by Jesus Christ; and will you (says UNBELIEF) in such a case as you are now, presume to come to Jesus Christ?

3. It is the sin that most suiteth with our sense of feeling. The coming sinner feels the workings of sin, of all manner of sin and wretchedness in his flesh; he also feels the wrath and judgment of God due to sin and oftentimes staggers under it. Now, (says UNBELIEF) you may see you have no grace; for that which works in you is corruption. You may also perceive that God doth not love you, because the sense of his wrath abides upon you. Therefore, how can you bear the face to come to Jesus Christ?

4. It is that sin above all others that most suiteth the wisdom of our flesh. The wisdom of our flesh thinks it prudence to question awhile, to stand back awhile, to hearken to both sides awhile; and not to be rash, sudden, or unadvised, in too bold a presuming upon Christ. And this wisdom UNBELIEF falls in with.

5. It is the sin above all others, that continually is whispering in the ear the soul, with mistrusts of the faithfulness of God, in keeping promise to them that come to Jesus Christ for life. It also suggests mistrusts about Christ's willingness to receive it, and save it. And no sin can do this so artfully as UNBELIEF.

6. It is also that sin which is always at hand to enter an objection against this or that promise, that by the Spirit of God is brought to our heart to comfort us. And if the poor coming sinner is not aware of it, it will by some exaction, slight, trick, or cavil, quickly wrest from him the promise again, and he shall have but little benefit of it.

7. It is that above all other sins, that weakens our prayers, our faith, our love, our diligence, our hope and expectations. It even taketh the heart away from God in duty.

8. Lastly, this sin, as I have said, even now, appears in the soul with so many sweet pretences to greater safety and security, that it is, as it were, counsel sent from heaven; bidding the soul be wise, wary, considerate, well-advised, and to take heed of too rash a venture upon believing. “Be sure, first, that God loves you; take hold of no promise until you are forced by God unto it; neither be sure of your salvation; doubt it still, though the testimony of the Lord has often been confirmed in you. Live not by faith, but by sense; and when you can neither see nor feel, then fear and mistrust, then doubt and question all.” This is the devilish counsel of UNBELIEF, which is so covered over with specious pretences, that the wisest Christian can hardly shake off these reasonings.

But to be brief. Let me here give the Christian reader a more particular description of the qualities of UNBELIEF, by opposing faith unto it, in these particulars.

Faith believeth the word of God, but UNBELIEF questioneth the certainty of it (Psa 106:24). Faith believeth the word, because it is true; but UNBELIEF doubteth thereof, because it is true (1 Tim 4:3; John 8:45). Faith sees more in a promise of God to help, than in all other things to hinder; but UNBELIEF,

notwithstanding God's promise saith, 'How can these things be?' (Rom 4:19-21; 2 Kings 7:2; John 3:11,12). Faith will make thee see love in the heart of Christ, when with his mouth he gives reproofs; but UNBELIEF will imagine wrath in his heart, when with his mouth and word he saith he loves us (Matt 15:22-29;25:24).

Faith will help the soul to wait, though God defers to give; but UNBELIEF will take offence and throw up all, if God makes any tarrying (Psa 25:5; Isa 8:17; 2 Kings 6:33). Faith will give comfort in the midst of fears; but UNBELIEF causeth fears in the midst of comforts (2 Chron 20:20,21; Matt 8:26; Luke 24:25). Faith will suck sweetness out of God's rod; but UNBELIEF can find no comfort in his greatest mercies (Psa 23; Num 12). Faith maketh great burdens light; but UNBELIEF maketh light ones intolerably heavy (Mal 1:12,13). Faith helpeth us when we are down; but UNBELIEF throws us down when we are up (Micah 7:8-10; Heb 4:11). Faith bringeth us near to God when we are far from him; but UNBELIEF puts us far from God when we are near to him (Heb 10:22; 3:12,13).

Where faith reigns, it declareth us to be the friends of God; but where UNBELIEF reigns, it declareth us to be his enemies (Heb 3:18; Rev 21:8). Faith putteth a man under grace; but UNBELIEF holdeth him under wrath (Rom 3:24-26; Eph 2:8; John 3:36; 1 John 5:10; Heb 3:17; Mark 16:16; John 8:24). Faith purifieth the heart; but UNBELIEF keepeth it polluted and impure (Acts 15:9; Titus 1:15,16). By faith the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us; but UNBELIEF shuts us up under the law to perish (Rom 4:23,24;11:32; Gal 3:23).

Faith maketh our work acceptable to God through Christ; but whatsoever is of UNBELIEF is sin. For without faith it is impossible to please him (Heb 11:4; Rom 14:23; Heb 11:6). Faith giveth us peace and comforteth our souls; but UNBELIEF worketh trouble and tossings, like the restless waves of the sea (Rom 5:1; James 1:6).

Faith maketh us see preciousness in Christ, but UNBELIEF sees no form, beauty, or comeliness in him (1 Pet 2; Isa 53:1-3). By faith we have our life in Christ's fulness; but by UNBELIEF we starve and pine away (Gal 2:20). Faith gives us the victory over the law, sin, death, the devil, and all evils: but UNBELIEF lays us obnoxious to them all (1 John 5:4; Luke 12:46).

Faith will show us more excellency in things not seen, than in them that are; but UNBELIEF sees more in things that are, than in things that will be hereafter (2 Cor 4:18; Heb 11:24-27; 1 Cor 15:32).

Faith makes the ways of God pleasant and admirable; but UNBELIEF maketh them heavy and hard (Gal 4:6; 2 Cor 12:10,11; John 6:60; Psa 2:3).

By faith Abraham, Isaac and Jacob possessed the land of promise; but because of UNBELIEF, neither Aaron, nor Moses, nor Miriam could get thither (Heb 11:9; 3:19). By faith the children of Israel passed through the Red sea; but by UNBELIEF the generality of them perished in the wilderness (Heb 11:29; Jude 5). By faith Gideon did more with three hundred men, and a few empty pitchers, than all the twelve tribes could do, because they believed not God (Judg 7:16-22; Num 14:11,14). By faith Peter walked on the water; but by UNBELIEF he began to sink (Matt 14:22-33).

Thus might many more be added, which for brevity's sake, I omit; beseeching every one that thinketh he hath a soul to save, or be damned, to take heed of UNBELIEF; lest seeing there is a promise left us of entering into his rest, any of us by UNBELIEF should indeed come short of it.